

Certification Corner: The Pursuit of Excellence

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The "pursuit of excellence" is a theme embodied in the development of the National Certification Program. *Pursuit* means continued effort or exertion; *excellence* refers to a high degree of merit or great worth. For those involved thus far, the National Certification Program has been a continual effort to produce an examination of "high merit and great worth."

Excellence is the standard that Susan Rosen (WA) and Susanne Carlson (OR) held as they approached the AMTA National Board with the idea of producing a nationally recognized credential for massage therapists and bodywork practitioners. The National Board, under the leadership of Robert King, undertook the project and named Elliot Greene as the project manager. Elliot's initial research produced the necessary information to insure future success.

With the naming of the Steering Committee in 1989, work began on the Job Analysis Survey, the research needed to define the entry-level, core body of knowledge for our profession. The pursuit of excellence was well established as the Steering Committee selected Knapp and Associates as its professional consultants for this part of the project. Considered one of America's finest psychometricians, Joan Knapp helped to create a survey now being utilized as an example of excellence for other professions. The high return rate of 42% has set another standard for other professions to emulate. Even more encouraging was the significant agreement among those surveyed on the content of the core

knowledge and skills for our field. This confirms the effectiveness of the project.

Next, the Certification Council selected a testing company to develop and administer the examination. Again, the pursuit of excellence guided the Council. The Psychological Corporation, with 70 years of experience in psychological, educational and professional testing, was the clear choice. Their parent company, Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, is the largest publisher of educational textbooks in the world. The Psychological Corporation has the personnel, technology, and expertise to lead us into the twenty-first century, and to insure that our National Certification Program will continue to serve as a model for all other allied health professions.

Currently, test development is underway. On August 22-25, 1991, an Item Writing Workshop was held in San Antonio, TX at The Psychological Corporation's headquarters. Eleven item writers, with guidance from testing company specialists, formulated over 300 questions. Each question represents a specific subject area from the approved, core body of knowledge established by the Job Analysis Survey.

More questions will be added to the item bank and a final Item Review Workshop is scheduled for late September. A Candidate Handbook will be prepared by November and should be distributed at the National Convention in Palm Springs. Over 25,000 will be mailed to AMTA Chapters, other national associations, organizations, schools, and

clinics. Look for the first National Certification Exam in September 1992.

The pursuit of excellence through a National Certification Exam would not have been possible without the tremendous growth of the massage and bodywork profession. Because of this growth and the demands from inside and outside the profession to define ourselves, National Certification is becoming a reality. I trust we share a professional vision that has, at its core, a solid foundation of knowledge, skills, abilities, and ethics. From that foundation we can build a diverse body of knowledge that bridges philosophies, cultures, disciplines, and experience. The pursuit of excellence will carry this profession forward, and with it, all those who share in the therapy of touch.

Thank You

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